



*North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Public Affairs
2001 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2001
Tel 919-733-9190 • Fax 919-733-7447*

Michael F. Easley, Governor

Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Debbie Crane, Director

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Contact: Jim Jones (919) 733-9190

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N.C. disaster planners looking for medical, non-medical volunteers

RALEIGH – Hurricane season has begun, and North Carolina's emergency medical services are looking for medical and non-medical volunteers to draw from in the event of a disaster.

Any North Carolina resident who is willing to volunteer to be deployed locally, regionally, statewide, and/or federally in the event of a disaster is encouraged to register through an Internet-based registry called SERVNC, announced Tuesday by the N.C. Office of Emergency Medical Services.

"It is important for us to have a base of volunteers to draw from in the event of a disaster," said Drexdal Pratt, chief of OEMS. "Through SERVNC we will be able to track mission requests during a disaster, and create a roster of volunteers whose skills meet those identified as needed to respond. It will help us to mobilize needed manpower on short notice."

The registration process is simple and takes no more than 15 minutes. Those interested should go to www.servnc.org/ on the Internet. During registration they will be asked contact information, deployment preferences, medical history, occupation and skills. If not already assigned to a response team, registrants may request to join a team already listed on SERVNC.

In the event of an emergency the system will electronically check the volunteers' medical credentials, send a message to the volunteers via e-mail, telephone and/or pager, and provide notification of all mission specific information and instructions for accepting or declining the mission.

"We're anticipating a strong response," Pratt said. "We live in a state where hurricanes can affect the mountains and the coast, and where tornadoes have torn through communities. This registry will provide the backup our first responders will need in the event of a disaster or emergency."

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